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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: ABDALLAH YEHIA IS "UNQUESTIONED LEADER" OF SLA/UNITY

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1. (SBU) Summary. Three SLA/Unity representatives visiting Tripoli said December 9 that Abdallah Yehia is the unquestioned leader of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity branch and that SLA/Unity is open to an agreement with the newly-formed United Revolutionary Front (URF), though serious talks between the two groups have yet to begin. They dismissed any efforts to bring the Fur into the predominantly Zaghawa URF and SLA/Unity grouping, stressing that military strength on the ground should determine representation in the peace talks. End Summary.

2. (SBU) PolOff and P/E Chief met with three SLA/Unity representatives currently in Tripoli - Osman Muhammad Busra (a political rep of Abdullah Yehia who has been physically present in Libya since July), Mahjub Hussein (an SLA/Unity spokesman resident in London who's been in Libya since mid-November), and Abubakr Kadu (described as the senior SLA/Unity field commander). Kadu arrived in Tripoli on/about November 29 from Juba and departs for Darfur on/about December 13.

YEHIA IS CLEAR LEADER OF SLA/UNITY

3. (SBU) According to the SLA/Unity delegation, Abdallah Yehia is the unquestioned political leader of the SLA/Unity branch. Suleiman Jamous and Sharif Harir are "just members" of the SLA/Unity government council. They were dismissive of suggestions Jamous might be in direct contact with Justice and Equality / Collective (JEM/CL) leader Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda. Busra was vague on the status of talks between JEM/CL and SLA/Unity, implying that only after both groups returned to the field on/about December 13 would they consider talking about some form of "alliance." SLA/Unity will only consider an agreement with the URF that makes Abdallah Yehia the new group's leader. Kadu boasted that JEM/CL has only five percent of the fighters he has under his command.

SLA/UNITY DISMISSIVE OF TRIBAL DIMENSIONS OF DARFUR CONFLICT

4. (SBU) All three dismissed the idea that there were tribal or ethnic dimensions to both the Darfur conflict and the UN/AU political process, and were similarly dismissive of any efforts to bring the Fur on board in any URF-SLA grouping. (Note: Although Hussein later bristled at the suggestion that he might be a member of the Zaghawa tribe, emphatically insisting that he was Nubian. End note.) "Any peace process with tribal underpinnings will fail," said Busra. They dismissed the idea that Fur leaders possess significant military strength; indeed, they described Abdulshafi and Diraige as militarily irrelevant. At the same time, they stressed SLA/Unity was inclusive of non-Zaghawa. Peace requires participation by forces with

significant military strength (SLA/Unity and JEM/CL) and one delegation comprising both the IDPs and refugees.

KHALIL, NOT ABDULWAHID, NECESSARY FOR PEACE AGREEMENT

¶15. (SBU) The three spoke at length about Abdulwahid, characterizing him as a "historic" figure, but one who has ultimately not kept up with the changing situation on the ground. He continues to see himself as the new John Garang. Hussein said he was in Paris in November and refused to meet with Abdulwahid, whom he described as "a liar". While they conceded Abdulwahid has some support among youth in the IDP camps, he does not represent all of Darfur's marginalized people. All three said without hesitation that Abdulwahid's participation was not necessary for a meaningful peace agreement.

¶16. (SBU) By contrast, they assessed that Khalil Ibrahim's participation in the peace process is important, stressing that Khalil is still in a position to influence the security situation in Darfur (by contrast with Abdulwahid). They noted favorably that Khalil had sent a representative to Juba. All three had positive things to say about JEM/CL leader Bahar Abu Gharda, praising his commitment to people "in the field" and his attendance at the October 27 Sirte meeting. "Bahar is interested in cooperating with SLA/Unity," said Busra, noting an alliance between Yehia and Abu Gharda is "definitely possible."

SLA/UNITY EAGER TO "COOPERATE" WITH UNAMID

¶17. (SBU) Busra asked to deliver a three-part message to the USG: (1) the GOS is a dictatorial regime; (2) the US should therefore play a political as well as humanitarian role in Darfur (implying the USG should choose sides between the rebels and the GOS); and (3) SLA/Unity will not obstruct the UNAMID deployment and would like to "actively cooperate" with international peacekeepers.

SATISFACTION WITH LIBYAN HOSTS

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¶18. (SBU) SLA/Unity is satisfied with Libya as a host of the UN/AU peace process and thinks Libya has generally been helpful. They conceded not all movements agree but refrained from comment on Libya's relationship with elements of the JEM leadership.

NO ROLE FOR MINAWI

¶19. (SBU) All three were emphatic that Minni Minawi has no place in the peace process except as a member of the GOS (they called it NCP) delegation. Hussein said it would be "impossible" for Minawi to join the UN/AU process at this late stage.

MILAM